

09/498,220

a flexible line, and
an inline air pump associated with each of said
one or more delivery tube assemblies for
assuring a positive flow of granular mold
flux through the flexible line;
means connected to each of said inline air pump to progres-
sively vary the flow rate of the granular mold flux
from the inline air pump to the top of the slab, said
means varying the air volume delivered to said inline
air pump.

Q 20. (Amended) The assembly for introducing granular mold flux
onto the top of a slab being cast within a continuous casting
mold as set forth in claim 19 wherein the apparatus is further
provided with a feed control panel wherein an operator may
remotely control the flow rate by either slowing up or stopping
the flow if ~~he~~ sees that the flux is building up too high so that
it is almost as high as the top of the mold, or by increasing the
flow rate if ~~he~~ sees that hot spots are developing or showing
through the flux.

B 21. (Amended) The assembly for introducing granular mold flux
onto the top of a slab being cast within a continuous casting
mold as set forth in claim 19 wherein an I/P device is provided

09/498,220

for each air pump, the air volume being delivered by the air pump being under the control of the associated I/P device.

4
22. (Amended) The assembly for introducing granular mold flux onto the top of a slab being cast within a continuous casting mold as set forth in claim 21 ³ wherein each I/P device is associated with an air volume booster.

REMARKS

Examiners Kevin Kerns and Dr. Kuang Lin are thanked for the courtesies extended to applicant's representative Glenn Hecko and the undersigned attorney on June 26, 2002. During the interview, the differences between applicant's invention and the prior art were discussed. Thus, it was pointed out that the gist of applicant's invention is to fluidize the granular material by entraining it in a stream of air, and to further progressively vary the flow rate of the granular mold flux as required by progressively varying the air flow. This combination of features is not taught by the prior art relied upon by the Office. Thus, the primary reference to Hubert et al delivers by gravity alone. The secondary reference to Mulder et al delivers a powder coating material, but does not teach that the flow rate can be varied by progressively varying the air volume delivered to said inline air pump. It was agreed during the interview that the prior art of